



(11) **EP 2 221 589 A1**

(12) **EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION**
published in accordance with Art. 153(4) EPC

(43) Date of publication:
25.08.2010 Bulletin 2010/34

(51) Int Cl.:
G01F 3/22 (2006.01) F23K 5/00 (2006.01)
F23N 5/18 (2006.01) F23N 5/26 (2006.01)
G01F 1/66 (2006.01)

(21) Application number: **08860578.7**

(86) International application number:
PCT/JP2008/003624

(22) Date of filing: **05.12.2008**

(87) International publication number:
WO 2009/075082 (18.06.2009 Gazette 2009/25)

(84) Designated Contracting States:
AT BE BG CH CY CZ DE DK EE ES FI FR GB GR HR HU IE IS IT LI LT LU LV MC MT NL NO PL PT RO SE SI SK TR
Designated Extension States:
AL BA MK RS

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(30) Priority: **10.12.2007 JP 2007318159**

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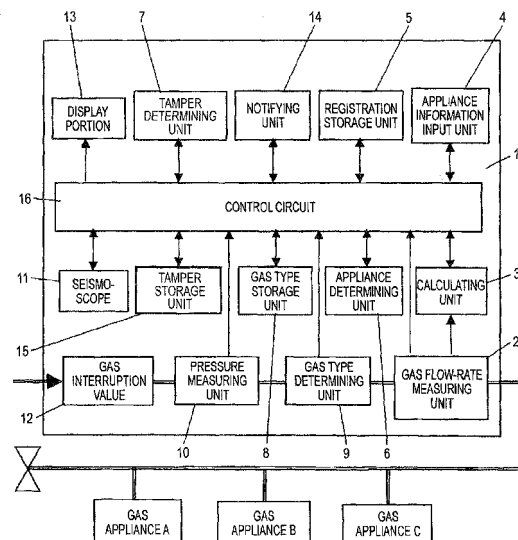
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(54) **GAS METER APPARATUS AND GAS SUPPLY SYSTEM USING THE APPARATUS**

(57) A gas meter device is provided which is configured in a manner that even if a user takes an unauthorized action such as the removal of a gas meter device in order to use gas without authorization, since the generation of a particular flow-rate change profile different from a normal flow-rate change profile of a gas appliance is detected, the sign of the tamper of the gas can be detected, whereby the tamper of the gas can be prevented.

The gas meter device includes an appliance determining unit 6 for determining a gas appliance being used and a tamper determining unit 7 which determines that the gas is used without authorization in the case where the particular flow-rate change profile different from an appliance determining value registered in a registration storage unit 5 is generated.

FIG. 1



EP 2 221 589 A1

Description

TECHNICAL FIELD

5 **[0001]** The present invention relates to a technique of determining and detecting a gas appliance in use in order to provide a fee structure and a service accorded to an appliance to be used and how to use thereof, in a gas meter which is disposed at the inlet portion of a gas supply pipe in each home and measures a gas flow rate.

BACKGROUND ART

10 **[0002]** Conventionally, as shown in Fig. 13, with respect to such a kind of the flow rate measuring device, there is proposed the following method as a method of determining a particular appliance (see patent document 1, for example).

[0003] The operation of the proposed example will be explained. Fig. 13 shows a gas flow-rate change profile at the time of starting a gas appliance and reference values (profile table) for performing a profile matching based on the profile. For each gas appliance, the number of the profile tables to be prepared is required corresponding to the number of a series of the gas flow-rate change profiles. Further, the number of the profile tables is required corresponding to the total number of gas appliances used in respective homes. The change of the flow rate measured by the flow rate measuring device of a gas meter is always compared with the profile tables to thereby extract the matched profile table and specify an appliance being used.

20 Patent document 1: JP-A-2003-149027

DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION

PROBLEMS THAT THE INVENTION IS TO SOLVE

25 **[0004]** In the aforesaid configuration, even if a user takes an unauthorized action such that a gas meter device is removed or a pipe is modified so as to bypass the gas meter device in order to use the gas without authorization, the gas flow-rate change profile of the gas appliance does not change between before and after the unauthorized action. Thus, there arises a problem that the tamper of gas before and after the unauthorized action can not be prevented.

30 **[0005]** The invention is intended to solve the aforesaid problem and an object of the invention is to provide a technique which can detect, when a user takes an unauthorized action, the generation of a particular flow-rate change profile different from a normal flow-rate change profile of a gas appliance to thereby prevent tamper of gas.

Means for Solving the Problems

35 **[0006]** In order to solve the aforesaid problem of the related art, the gas meter device according to the invention is configured to include:

- 40 a flow-rate measuring unit which is coupled to a gas supply pipe for homes and measures a gas flow rate;
- an appliance information input unit;
- a registration storage unit which stores data registered by the appliance information input unit;
- an appliance determining unit which compares an appliance determining value registered in the registration storage unit with a gas flow-rate value measured by the flow-rate measuring unit to thereby determine a gas appliance being used; and
- 45 a tamper determining unit which determines that gas is used without authorization when a particular flow-rate change profile different from the appliance determining value registered in the registration storage unit is generated due to an unauthorized action of a user or the like.

ADVANTAGES OF THE INVENTION

50 **[0007]** The gas meter device according to the invention is configured to detect, when a user takes an unauthorized action, the generation of a particular flow-rate change profile different from a normal flow-rate change profile of a gas appliance. Thus, since the sign of the tamper of the gas can be detected, the tamper of the gas can be prevented.

55 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0008]

Fig. 1 is a diagram showing the configuration of a flow-rate measuring apparatus according to the first embodiment of the invention.

Fig. 2 is a diagram showing the configuration of a flow-rate measuring portion in the first embodiment of the invention.

Fig. 3 is a flow chart of a determining operation in the first embodiment of the invention.

5 Fig. 4 is diagrams showing flow rates and calculation values in the first embodiment of the invention.

Fig. 5 is a flow chart of another determining operation in the first embodiment of the invention.

Fig. 6 is a flow chart of still another determining operation in the first embodiment of the invention.

Fig. 7 is a flow chart of still another determining operation in the first embodiment of the invention.

Fig. 8 is a flow chart of still another determining operation in the first embodiment of the invention.

10 Fig. 9 is a flow chart of still another determining operation in the first embodiment of the invention.

Fig. 10 is a flow chart of still another determining operation in the first embodiment of the invention.

Fig. 11 is a flow chart of still another determining operation in the first embodiment of the invention.

Fig. 12 is a flow chart of still another determining operation in the first embodiment of the invention.

15 Fig. 13 is a data diagram showing the determining method of a flow-rate measuring apparatus of the related art.

EXPLANATION OF SYMBOLS

[0009]

20	1	gas meter device
	2	gas flow-rate measuring unit
	3	calculating unit
	4	appliance information input unit
	5	registration storage unit
25	6	appliance determining unit
	7	tamper determining unit
	8	gas type storage unit
	9	gas type determining unit
	10	pressure measuring unit
30	11	seismoscope
	12	gas interruption valve
	13	display portion
	14	notifying unit
	15	tamper storage unit
35	16	control circuit
	17	measuring flow path
	18, 19	ultrasonic transmitter-receiver

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

40 **[0010]** The first invention is configured to include a flow-rate measuring unit which is coupled to a gas supply pipe for homes and measures a gas flow rate; an appliance information input unit; a registration storage unit which stores data registered by the appliance information input unit; an appliance determining unit which compares an appliance determining value registered in the registration storage unit with a gas flow-rate value measured by the flow-rate measuring unit to thereby determine a gas appliance being used; and a tamper determining unit which determines that gas is used without authorization when a particular flow-rate change profile different from the appliance determining value registered in the registration storage unit is generated due to an unauthorized action of a user or the like. Thus, even if a user takes an unauthorized action such as the removal of a gas meter device in order to use gas without authorization, since the generation of a particular flow-rate change profile different from a normal flow-rate change profile of a gas appliance is detected, the sign of the tamper of the gas can be detected, whereby the tamper of the gas can be prevented.

50 **[0011]** The second invention is configured, in particular, in the gas meter device according to the first invention, to further include a gas type storage unit which stores gas type supplied into the gas supply pipe at a time of normal use; and a gas type determining unit which determines gas type being supplied at present, wherein the tamper determining unit determines that the gas is used without authorization in a case where, in addition to that the particular flow-rate change profile different from the appliance determining value registered in the registration storage unit is generated, the gas type determined by the gas type determining unit differs from the gas type stored in the gas type storage unit due to mixture of air or the like and so the gas type changes. According to this configuration, when the particular flow-rate change profile considered to be caused by the tamper of a user is generated, the gas type is determined to thereby

confirm whether or not the component of the gas has changed. Thus, since it is possible to totally determine whether or not the flow-rate change profile is generated due to the tamper of a user or occurs accidentally due to another reason, the tamper of the gas can be prevented more surely.

5 [0012] The third invention is configured, in particular, in the gas meter device according to the first invention, to further include a pressure measuring unit which measures a pressure of the gas within the gas supply pipe, wherein the tamper determining unit determines that the gas is used without authorization in a case where, in addition to that the particular flow-rate change profile different from the appliance determining value registered in the registration storage unit is generated, the pressure of the gas measured by the pressure measuring unit reduces rapidly. According to this configuration, when the particular flow-rate change profile considered to be caused by the tamper of a user is generated, the gas pressure within the gas supply pipe is measured to thereby confirm whether or not the pressure reduces abruptly. 10 Thus, since it is possible to totally determine whether or not the flow-rate change profile is generated due to the tamper of a user or occurs accidentally due to another reason, the tamper of the gas can be prevented more surely.

15 [0013] The fourth invention is configured, in particular, in the gas meter device according to the first invention, to further include a seismoscope which detects vibration of the gas meter device, wherein the tamper determining unit determines that the gas is used without authorization in a case where, in addition to that the particular flow-rate change profile different from the appliance determining value registered in the registration storage unit is generated, the seismoscope detects abnormal vibration. According to this configuration, when the particular flow-rate change profile considered to be caused by the tamper of a user is generated, it is confirmed whether or not the seismoscope detects abnormal vibration generated by an action such as the removal of the gas meter device. Thus, since it is possible to totally determine 20 whether or not the flow-rate change profile is generated due to the tamper of a user or occurs accidentally due to another reason, the tamper of the gas can be prevented more surely.

25 [0014] The fifth invention is configured, in particular, in the gas meter device according to one of the first to fourth inventions, to further include a gas interruption valve which interrupts the gas when it is determined that the gas is used without authorization, wherein the tamper determining unit continues the gas interruption valve to interrupt the gas until the interruption is released by a management company or the like. According to this configuration, even if a user tries to conceal own unauthorized action by such an action of attaching the meter having been removed in advance to an original position so that the unauthorized action is not discovered by the inspection etc. of a management company, the gas can not be used in a normal state until the interruption state is notified to the management company or the like to thereby release the interruption state. Thus, since the unauthorized action can not be concealed, the tamper of the gas 30 can be prevented more surely.

35 [0015] The sixth invention is configured, in particular, in the gas meter device according to one of the first to fourth inventions, to further include a display portion which displays, when it is determined that the gas is used without authorization, the tamper. According to this configuration, when it is determined that a user takes an unauthorized action, an alarm etc. as to the unauthorized action is displayed on the display portion and remained as the evidence of the unauthorized action. Thus, since the unauthorized action can not be concealed, the tamper of the gas can be prevented more surely.

40 [0016] The seventh invention is configured, in particular, in the gas meter device according to one of the first to fourth inventions, to further include a notifying unit which notifies, when it is determined that the gas is used without authorization, the tamper to a management company or the like in real time. According to this configuration, when it is determined that a user takes an unauthorized action, an alarm or the like as to the unauthorized action is notified to the management company or the like in real time. Thus, when a person in charge of the management company or the like is always in a stand-by state, a necessary action can be taken immediately. Accordingly, the tamper of the gas can be prevented more surely.

45 [0017] The eighth invention is configured, in particular, in the gas meter device according to one of the first to fourth inventions, to further include a tamper storage unit which stores, when it is determined that the gas is used without authorization, the tamper; and a notifying unit which notifies the stored content of the tamper storage unit to a management company or the like periodically at a predetermined timing. According to this configuration, after it is determined that a user takes an unauthorized action, the unauthorized action is notified to the management company or the like periodically at a predetermined timing. Thus, a person in charge of the management company or the like is merely required to stand 50 by in synchronism with the timing, whereby a necessary action can be taken. Accordingly, the tamper of the gas can be prevented more surely.

55 [0018] The ninth invention is configured, in particular, in the gas meter device according to one of the first to fourth inventions, to further include a tamper storage unit which stores, when it is determined that the gas is used without authorization, the tamper; and a notifying unit which notifies the stored content of the tamper storage unit in accordance with an inquiry from a management company or the like. According to this configuration, after it is determined that a user takes an unauthorized action, the unauthorized action is notified in response to an inquiry from the management company or the like. Thus, according to the convenience of a person in charge of the management company or the like, a necessary action can be taken. Accordingly, the tamper of the gas can be prevented more surely.

[0019] The tenth invention is configured in a manner that, in particular, in the gas meter device according to one of the first to ninth inventions, the flow-rate measuring unit is an ultrasonic measuring type. According to this configuration, since the simultaneous measurement can be performed, the details of the flow-rate change according to the time lapse can be measured. Thus, when the generation of the particular flow-rate change profile different from the normal flow-rate change profile of a gas appliance is detected with a high accuracy, the tamper of the gas can be prevented more surely.

[0020] The eleventh invention is configured in a manner that, in particular, in the gas meter device according to one of the first to tenth inventions, a gas supply system using the gas meter device coupled to a gas supply pipe for homes is configured. According to this configuration, since the tamper of the gas can be prevented, the benefit to be originally obtained by the gas management company or the like can be protected.

(First Embodiment)

[0021] Fig. 1 shows the configuration of a gas meter device according to an embodiment of the invention.

[0022] In Fig. 1, 1 depicts a gas meter device which is provided on the way of a gas supply pipe, and at least one gas appliance provided in each client home is coupled to a pipe on the downstream side of the gas meter device.

[0023] The gas meter device 1 includes a gas flow-rate measuring unit 2, a calculating unit 3 and an appliance information input unit 4 each for determining the gas appliance according to the invention, a registration storage unit 5 and an appliance determining unit 6 each for registering the information, a tamper determining unit 7 for determining whether or not gas is used without authorization, a gas type storage unit 8 for storing gas type supplied within the gas supply pipe, a gas type determining unit 9 for determining the gas type supplied within the gas supply pipe, a pressure measuring unit 10 for measuring the pressure within the gas supply pipe, a seismoscope 11 for detecting the vibration of the gas meter device, a gas interruption valve 12 for interrupting the gas when the gas is used without authorization, a display portion 13 for displaying the tamper when the gas is used without authorization, a notifying unit 14 for notifying the tamper to a management company or the like. when the gas is used without authorization, a tamper storage unit 15 for storing the tamper when the gas is used without authorization, a control circuit 16 for unifying and controlling the operations of the seismoscope 11 and the pressure measuring unit 11, processings such as the appliance determining processing and the tamper determining processing, and a battery (not shown) serving as a power source of the aforesaid constituent elements.

[0024] The registration storage unit 5 stores appliance determining values serving as comparison determining values for determining whether or not the flow rate has changed and safety reference values serving as comparison determining values for determining whether or not an abnormality has occurred. Although the invention uses a semiconductor memory as a storage unit for storing and holding recorded data, a magnetic recording medium or other unit may be used so long as data can be recorded additionally and rewritten. Further, data can be recorded in a plurality of recording mediums in a divided manner as the need arises.

[0025] Although a measuring unit or an ultrasonic type is used as to the gas flow-rate measuring unit 2 of the invention, another flow-rate measuring method such as the fluidic type can be used as the measuring method so long as the flow rate can be measured continuously at a constant cycle in a short time.

[0026] Hereinafter the operation will be explained.

[0027] First, the flow-rate measurement of the ultrasonic type will be explained based on Fig. 2. A measuring flow path 17 has a rectangular section. A pair of ultrasonic transmitter-receivers 18, 19 are attached on opposed wall surfaces disposed in orthogonal direction with respect to the gas flow direction of the measuring flow path 17 so as to sandwich the measuring flow path 17 therebetween in a manner that the ultrasonic transmitter-receivers are disposed on the upstream side and the downstream side of the flow path so that a straight line connecting these ultrasonic transmitter-receivers has a slanted angle ϕ with respect to the wall surface of the flow path. The ultrasonic transmitter-receivers 18, 19 alternately transmit and receive the ultrasonic to thereby measure with a constant time interval a difference of the transmission time of the ultrasonic between the forward direction transmission and the reverse direction transmission, respectively, and output the difference as a transmission time difference signal. A calculation unit (not shown) receives the transmission time difference signal and calculates a flow speed and a flow rate of a fluid to be measured.

[0028] A calculation expression will be shown below.

[0029] L of Fig. 2 depicts a measuring distance, and supposing that t_1 depicts a transmission time from the downstream side, t_2 a transmission time from the upstream side and C the speed of sound, a flow speed V is expressed as follows.

$$V = (L / 2 \cos \phi) \cdot ((1 / t_1) - (1 / t_2)) \quad (\text{Expression 1})$$

[0030] The time interval of the measurement can be set in a range capable of transmitting and receiving the ultrasonic, and the invention performs the measurement with the time interval of 2 seconds. The time interval can be made shorter

in view of the measurement principle. Since there is a gas appliance which starts in a time shorter than 2 seconds, it is advantageous to shorten the measurement time interval in order to simultaneously determine the appliance. However, there arises such a problem that the consumption rate of a battery becomes large when the measurement time interval is made shorter. Further, when the measuring time is set to be tens seconds which is almost same as the membrane type used in the conventional gas meter, it becomes difficult to view and determine the difference of the flow rate change according to the algorithm of the invention. Accordingly, according to the invention, the measurement is made with an interval of 2 seconds as a time balanced in view of the cost and the efficiency of determining the appliance.

[0031] Next, the determining procedure of the operating state of the gas appliance will be explained with reference to Fig. 3.

[0032] As explained above, the gas meter device 1 is arranged in a manner that the gas flow rate is measured at every 2 seconds, then the measured data is sent to the calculating unit 3 and the calculating unit differentiates the flow rate values and outputs a difference data of the flow rate at every 2 seconds.

[0033] The difference data is sequentially sent to the appliance determining unit 6, which in turn compares the differential data with a change determining value registered in the registration storage unit 5. When the difference value exceeds the change determining value, it is determined that a state change occurs at the gas appliance. When the change is detected, the appliance determining unit 6 compares with the appliance determining values of individual states of each of the gas appliances registered in the registration storage unit 5 to thereby determine the appliance and the state of the appliance thus determined. As a result of the determination of the appliance, when it is determined that the appliance is not registered in the registration storage unit 5, the tamper determining unit 7 confirms whether or not there is a continuation of a particular flow rate. If there is a continuation of the particular flow rate, it is determined that a user without authorization uses the gas.

[0034] Fig. 4(a) shows the change of the gas flow rate and the change of the difference value at the time of actually using the gas appliance.

[0035] In the graph of Fig. 4(a), a steady line depicts the flow rate values of the gas measured by the flow-rate measuring unit and a broken line depicts the differential values thereof, that is, the difference values at every 2 seconds. At the time of starting the gas appliance, the difference value exhibits the peak value on the positive side, whilst the difference value exhibits the peak value on the negative side at the time of stopping the appliance.

[0036] Next, Fig. 4(b) shows an example of the change of the gas flow rate and the change of the difference value in the case where a user takes an unauthorized action such as the removal of the gas meter device.

[0037] In the graph of Fig. 4(b), a steady line depicts the flow rate values of the gas measured by the flow-rate measuring unit and a broken line depicts the differential values thereof, that is, the difference values at every 2 seconds. As an example where a user takes the unauthorized action such as the removal of the gas meter device, there is considered such a situation that the flow rate on the negative side which never occurs in the normal use of the gas appliance appears continuously. In such a case, supposing that the threshold value of the flow rate is -50L/h and the threshold value of the continuous time is 10 seconds, when the flow rate on the negative side exceeding -50L/h continues 10 seconds or more, it is determined that a user without authorization uses the gas.

[0038] In this manner, when a user takes the unauthorized action such as the removal of the gas meter device in order to without authorization use the gas, since the continuous generation of the particular flow rate value such as the flow rate on the negative side which never occurs in the normal use of the gas appliance is detected, the sign of the tamper of the gas can be detected, the tamper of the gas can be prevented.

[0039] Further, as shown in Fig. 5, for example, the tamper determining unit 7 may be not only configured to detect the continuous generation of the particular flow rate value such as the flow rate on the negative side which never occurs in the normal use of the gas appliance but also configured to determine that the gas is used without authorization when the gas type determined by the gas type determining unit 9 differs from the gas type stored in the gas type storage unit 8 due to the mixing of the air etc. and so the gas type changes. According to this configuration, when a particular flow rate value considered to be caused by the tamper of a user appears continuously, the gas type is determined to thereby confirm whether or not the component of the gas has changed. Thus, since it is possible to totally determine whether or not the change of the gas type occurs due to the tamper of a user or occurs accidentally due to another reason, the tamper of the gas can be prevented more surely.

[0040] Further, in the ultrasonic measuring type, when it is utilized that the transmission time of the ultrasonic changes according to the gas type, since the transmission times of the ultrasonic in both the forward direction transmission and the reverse direction transmission between the ultrasonic transmitter-receivers 18, 19 simultaneously increases or reduces in the case where the gas component changes due the mixture of the air etc., the change of the gas type can be detected easily. Thus, it is possible to constitute both the gas flow-rate measuring unit 2 and the gas type determining unit 9 as a single unit without providing them independently.

[0041] Further, as shown in Fig. 6, for example, the tamper determining unit 7 may be not only configured to detect the continuous generation of the particular flow rate value such as the flow rate on the negative side which never occurs in the normal use of the gas appliance but also configured to determine that the gas is used without authorization when

the gas pressure measured by the pressure measuring unit 10 reduces abruptly. According to this configuration, when a particular flow rate value considered to be caused by the tamper of a user appears continuously, the gas pressure within the gas supply pipe is measured to thereby confirm whether or not the pressure reduces abruptly. Thus, since it is possible to totally determine whether or not the abrupt reduction of the gas pressure occurs due to the tamper of a user or occurs accidentally due to another reason, the tamper of the gas can be prevented more surely.

[0042] Further, as shown in Fig. 7, for example, the tamper determining unit 7 may be not only configured to detect the continuous generation of the particular flow rate value such as the flow rate on the negative side which never occurs in the normal use of the gas appliance but also configured to determine that the gas is used without authorization when the seismoscope 11 detects abnormal vibration. According to this configuration, when a particular flow rate value considered to be caused by the tamper of a user appears continuously, it is confirmed whether or not the seismoscope 11 detects abnormal vibration generated by an action such as the removal of the gas meter device. Thus, since it is possible to totally determine whether or not the abnormal vibration occurs due to the tamper of a user or occurs accidentally due to another reason, the tamper of the gas can be prevented more surely.

[0043] The seismoscope 11 may be configured to also have a function of detecting the vibration such as an earthquake as well as the function of detecting the abnormal vibration generated by an action such as the removal of the gas meter device.

[0044] Further, as shown in Fig. 8, for example, the tamper determining unit 7 may be configured in a manner that when it is determined that the gas is used without authorization, the gas is interrupted by the gas interruption valve 12 and the gas interruption by the gas interruption valve 12 is continued until the interruption is released by a management company or the like. According to this configuration, even if a user tries to conceal own unauthorized action by such an action of attaching the meter having been removed in advance to an original position so that the unauthorized action is not discovered by the inspection or the like of a management company, the gas can not be used in a normal state until the interruption state is notified to the management company or the like to thereby release the interruption state. Thus, since the unauthorized action can not be concealed, the tamper of the gas can be prevented more surely.

[0045] Further, as shown in Fig. 9, for example, the tamper determining unit 7 may be configured in a manner that when it is determined that the gas is used without authorization, the tamper is displayed on the display portion 13. According to this configuration, when it is determined that a user takes an unauthorized action, an alarm or the like as to the unauthorized action is displayed on the display portion 13 and remained as the evidence of the unauthorized action. Thus, since the unauthorized action can not be concealed, the tamper of the gas can be prevented more surely.

[0046] The display portion 13 may be configured to also have a function of displaying a flow rate of the used gas or the like as well as the function of displaying the alarm or the like as to the unauthorized action.

[0047] Further, as shown in Fig. 10, for example, the tamper determining unit 7 may be configured in a manner that when it is determined that the gas is used without authorization, the tamper is notified to the management company or the like in real time from the notifying unit 14. According to this configuration, when it is determined that a user takes an unauthorized action, an alarm or the like as to the unauthorized action is notified to the management company or the like in real time. Thus, when a person in charge of the management company or the like is always in a stand-by state, a necessary action according to a situation can be taken immediately such as the stop of the gas supply to a user's home or the visit to and inspection for the user's home or the confirmation of and communication with the user. Accordingly, the tamper of the gas can be prevented more surely.

[0048] Further, as shown in Fig. 11, for example, the tamper determining unit 7 may be configured in a manner that when it is determined that the gas is used without authorization, the tamper is stored in the tamper storage unit 15 and the stored contents of the tamper storage unit 15 is notified to the management company or the like periodically at a predetermined timing from the notifying unit 14. According to this configuration, after it is determined that a user takes an unauthorized action, the unauthorized action is notified to the management company or the like periodically at a predetermined timing. Thus, a person in charge of the management company or the like is merely required to stand by in synchronism with the timing, whereby a necessary action according to a situation can be taken such as the stop of the gas supply to a user's home or the visit to and inspection for the user's home or the confirmation of and communication with the user. Accordingly, the tamper of the gas can be prevented more surely.

[0049] Further, as shown in Fig. 12, for example, the tamper determining unit 7 may be configured in a manner that when it is determined that the gas is used without authorization, the tamper is stored in the tamper storage unit 15 and the stored contents of the tamper storage unit 15 is notified from the notifying unit 14 in response to an inquiry from the management company or the like. According to this configuration, after it is determined that a user takes an unauthorized action, the unauthorized action is notified in response to an inquiry from the management company or the like. Thus, according to the convenience of a person in charge of the management company or the like, a necessary action according to a situation can be taken such as the stop of the gas supply to a user's home or the visit to and inspection for the user's home or the confirmation of and communication with the user. Accordingly, the tamper of the gas can be prevented more surely.

[0050] Further, the invention includes a gas supply system containing a gas supply source using the gas meter device

according to the invention thus configured.

[0051] Although the explanation is made as to the case where the ultrasonic flow meter is used, it will be apparent that the similar effects can be obtained in the case of using a flow-rate measuring unit of another instantaneous type.

[0052] The invention is based on Japanese Patent Application No. 2007-318159 filed on December 10, 2007, the contents of which is incorporated herein by reference.

[0053] Although the various embodiments of the invention are explained above, the invention is not limited to these embodiments, and it is intended that those skilled in the art can change and modify the embodiments based on the description of the specification and the well known technique and such the changes and modifications are contained in a scope claimed to be protected.

Industrial Applicability

[0054] As described above, the gas meter device according to the invention is configured to include the flow-rate measuring unit which is coupled to the gas supply pipe for homes and measures a gas flow rate; the appliance information input unit; the registration storage unit which stores data registered by the appliance information input unit; the appliance determining unit which compares the appliance determining value registered in the registration storage unit with a gas flow-rate value measured by the flow-rate measuring unit to thereby determine a gas appliance being used; and a tamper determining unit which determines that gas is used without authorization when the particular flow-rate change profile different from the appliance determining value registered in the registration storage unit is generated due to an unauthorized action of a user or the like. Thus, even if a user takes an unauthorized action such as the removal of a gas meter device in order to use gas without authorization, since the generation of a particular flow-rate change profile different from a normal flow-rate change profile of a gas appliance is detected, the sign of the tamper of the gas can be detected, whereby the tamper of the gas can be prevented..

Claims

1. A gas meter device, comprising:

a flow-rate measuring unit which is coupled to a gas supply pipe for homes and measures a gas flow rate;
 an appliance information input unit;
 a registration storage unit which stores data registered by the appliance information input unit;
 an appliance determining unit which compares an appliance determining value registered in the registration storage unit with a gas flow-rate value measured by the flow-rate measuring unit to thereby determine a gas appliance being used; and
 a tamper determining unit which determines that gas is used without authorization when a particular flow-rate change profile different from the appliance determining value registered in the registration storage unit is generated due to an unauthorized action or the like of a user.

2. A gas meter device according to claim 1, further comprising:

a gas type storage unit which stores gas type supplied into the gas supply pipe at a time of normal use; and
 a gas type determining unit which determines gas type being supplied at present, wherein
 the tamper determining unit determines that the gas is used without authorization in a case where, in addition to that the particular flow-rate change profile different from the appliance determining value registered in the registration storage unit is generated, the gas type determined by the gas type determining unit differs from the gas type stored in the gas type storage unit due to mixture of air etc. and so the gas type changes.

3. A gas meter device according to claim 1, further comprising:

a pressure measuring unit which measures a pressure of the gas within the gas supply pipe, wherein
 the tamper determining unit determines that the gas is used without authorization in a case where, in addition to that the particular flow-rate change profile different from the appliance determining value registered in the registration storage unit is generated, the pressure of the gas measured by the pressure measuring unit reduces rapidly.

4. A gas meter device according to claim 1, further comprising:

EP 2 221 589 A1

a seismoscope which detects vibration of the gas meter device, wherein the tamper determining unit determines that the gas is used without authorization in a case where, in addition to that the particular flow-rate change profile different from the appliance determining value registered in the registration storage unit is generated, the seismoscope detects abnormal vibration.

- 5
5. A gas meter device according to one of claims 1 to 4, further comprising:
- a gas interruption valve which interrupts the gas when it is determined that the gas is used without authorization, wherein
- 10 the tamper determining unit continues the gas interruption valve to interrupt the gas until the interruption is released by a management company or the like.
6. A gas meter device according to one of claims 1 to 4, further comprising:
- 15 a display portion which displays, when it is determined that the gas is used without authorization, the tamper.
7. A gas meter device according to one of claims 1 to 4, further comprising:
- 20 a notifying unit which notifies, when it is determined that the gas is used without authorization, the tamper to a management company or the like in real time.
8. A gas meter device according to one of claims 1 to 4, further comprising:
- 25 a tamper storage unit which stores, when it is determined that the gas is used without authorization, the tamper; and
a notifying unit which notifies a stored content of the tamper storage unit to a management company or the like periodically at a predetermined timing.
9. A gas meter device according to one of claims 1 to 4, further comprising:
- 30 a tamper storage unit which stores, when it is determined that the gas is used without authorization, the tamper; and
a notifying unit which notifies a stored content of the tamper storage unit in accordance with an inquiry from a management company or the like.
- 35
10. A gas meter device according to one of claims 1 to 9, wherein the flow-rate measuring unit is an ultrasonic measuring type.
- 40
11. A gas supply system using the gas meter device according to one of claims 1 to 10.
- 45
- 50
- 55

FIG. 1

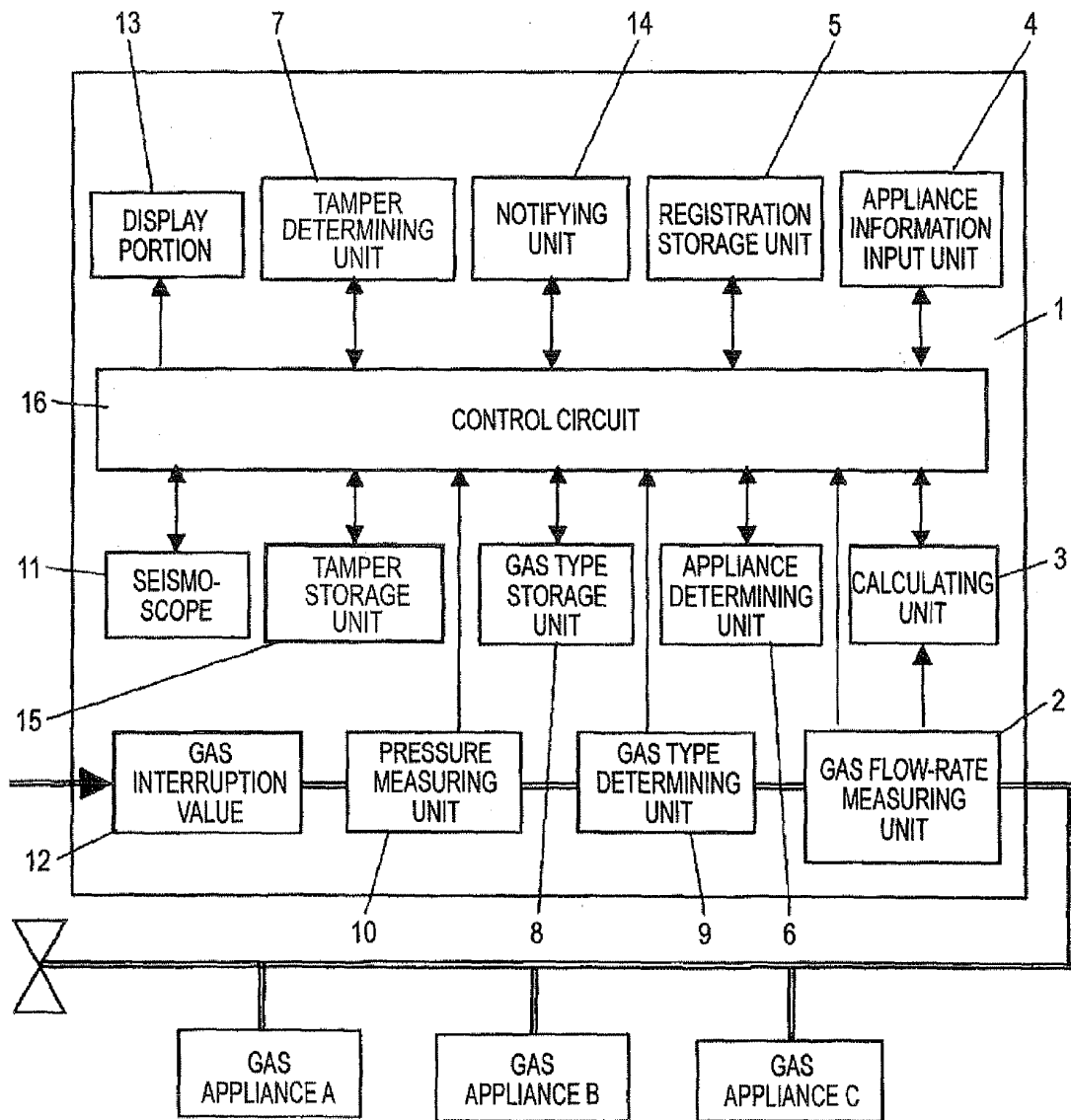


FIG. 2

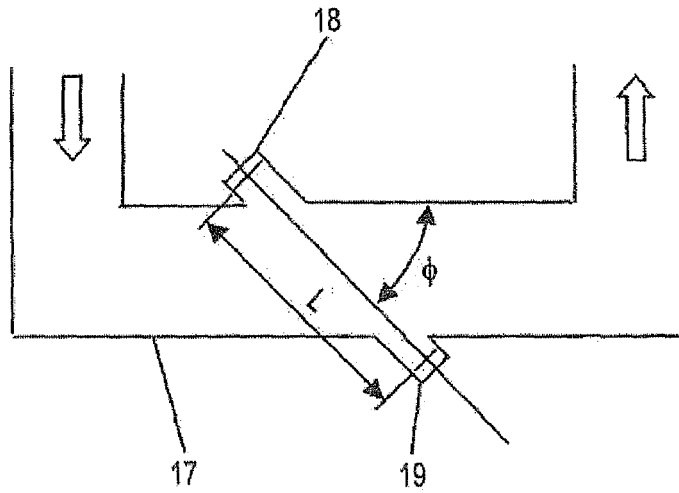


FIG. 3

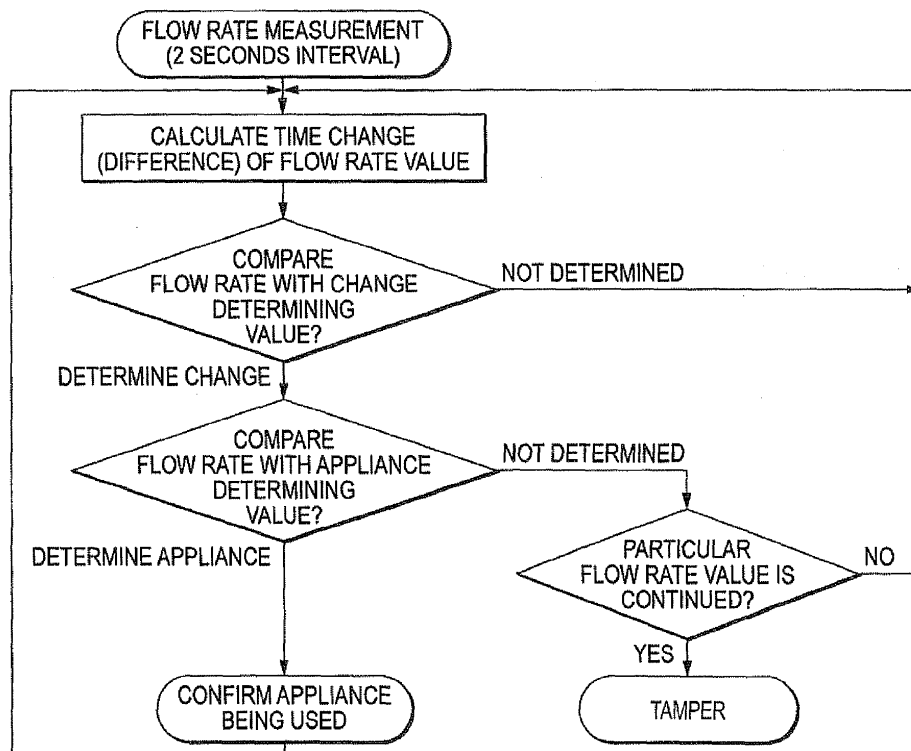


FIG. 4 (a)

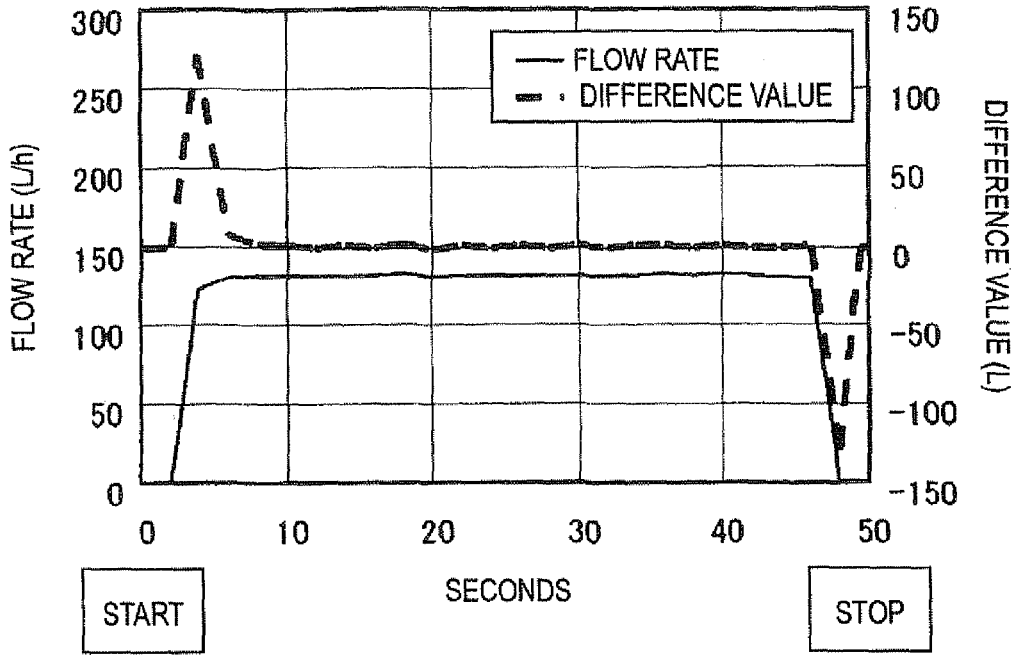


FIG. 4 (b)

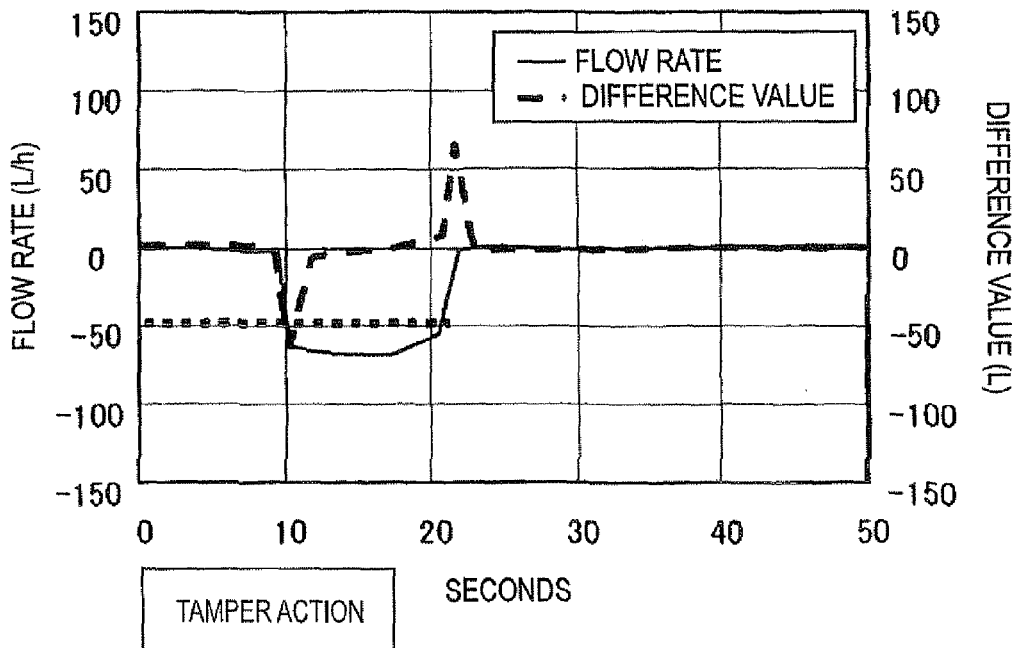


FIG. 5

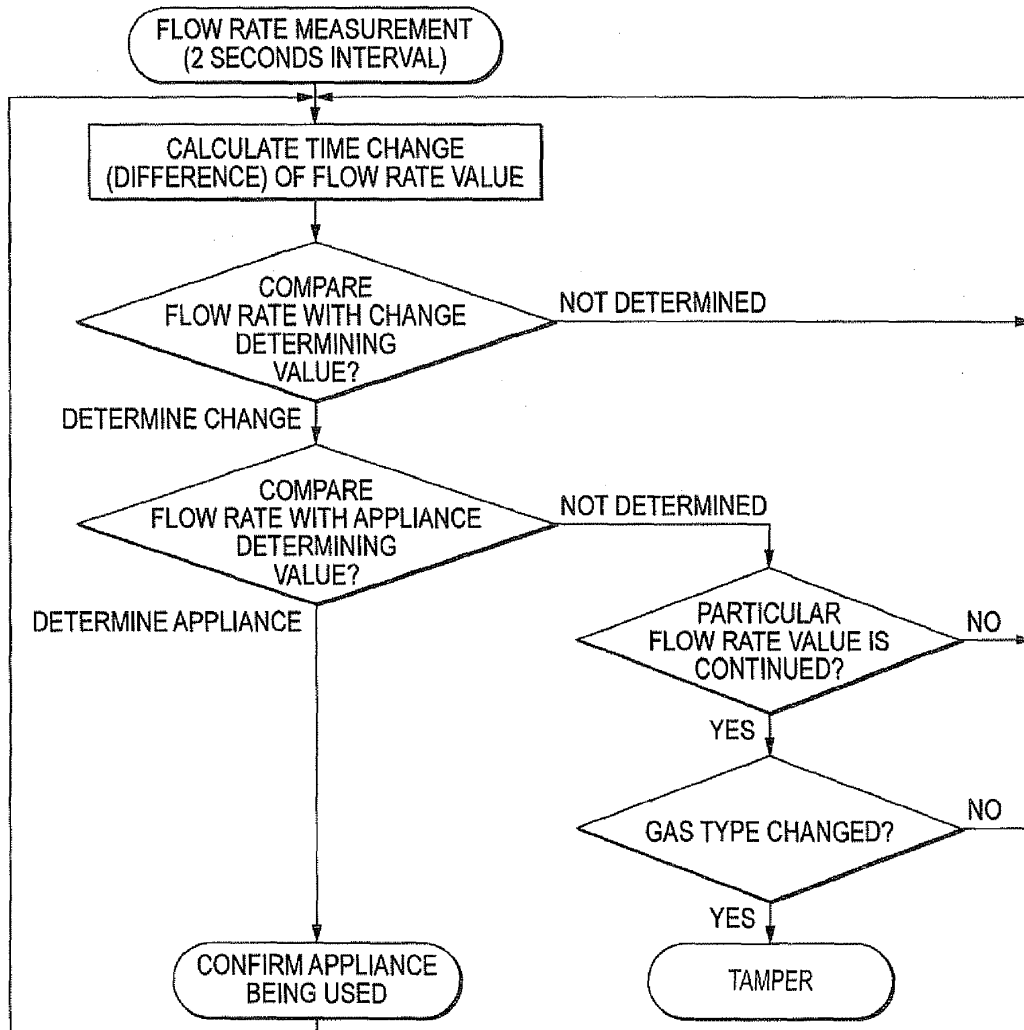


FIG. 6

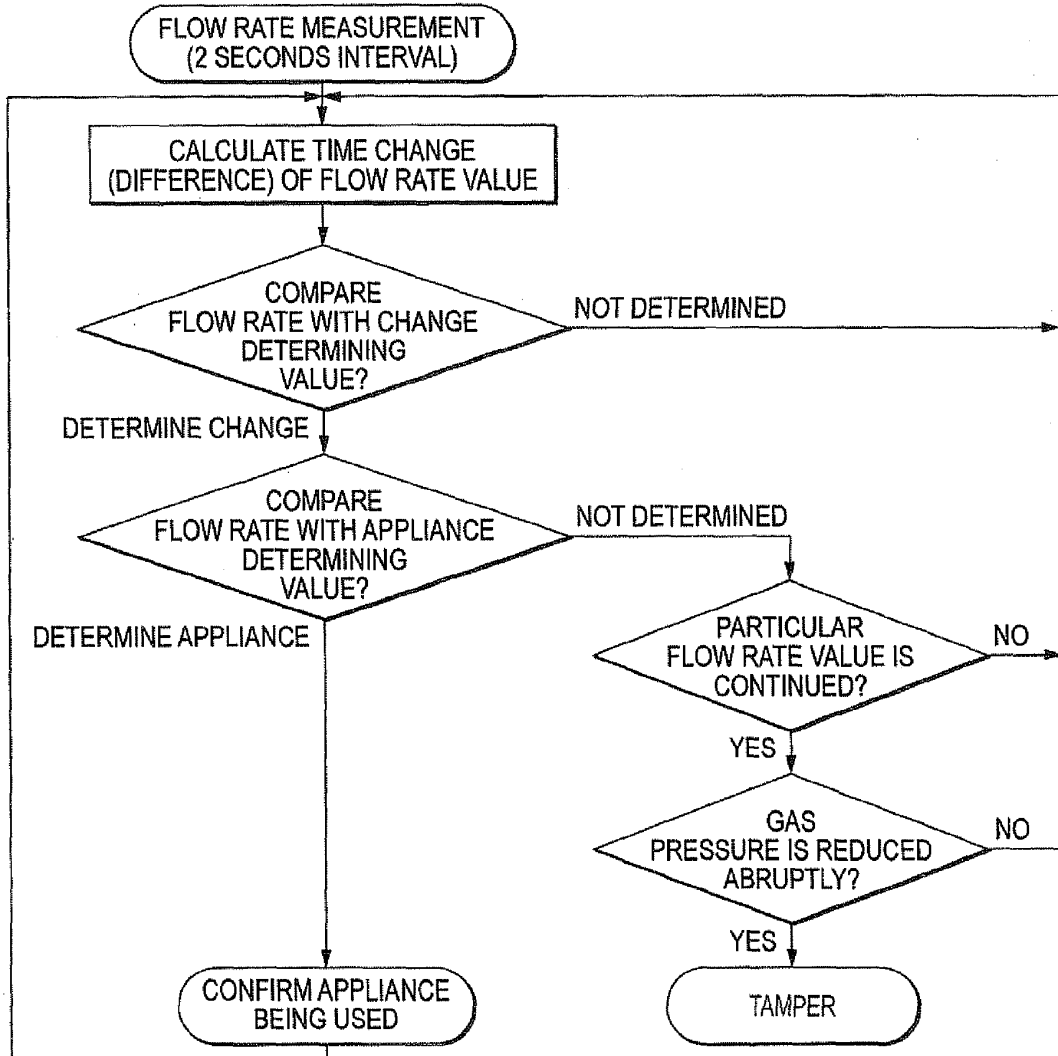


FIG. 7

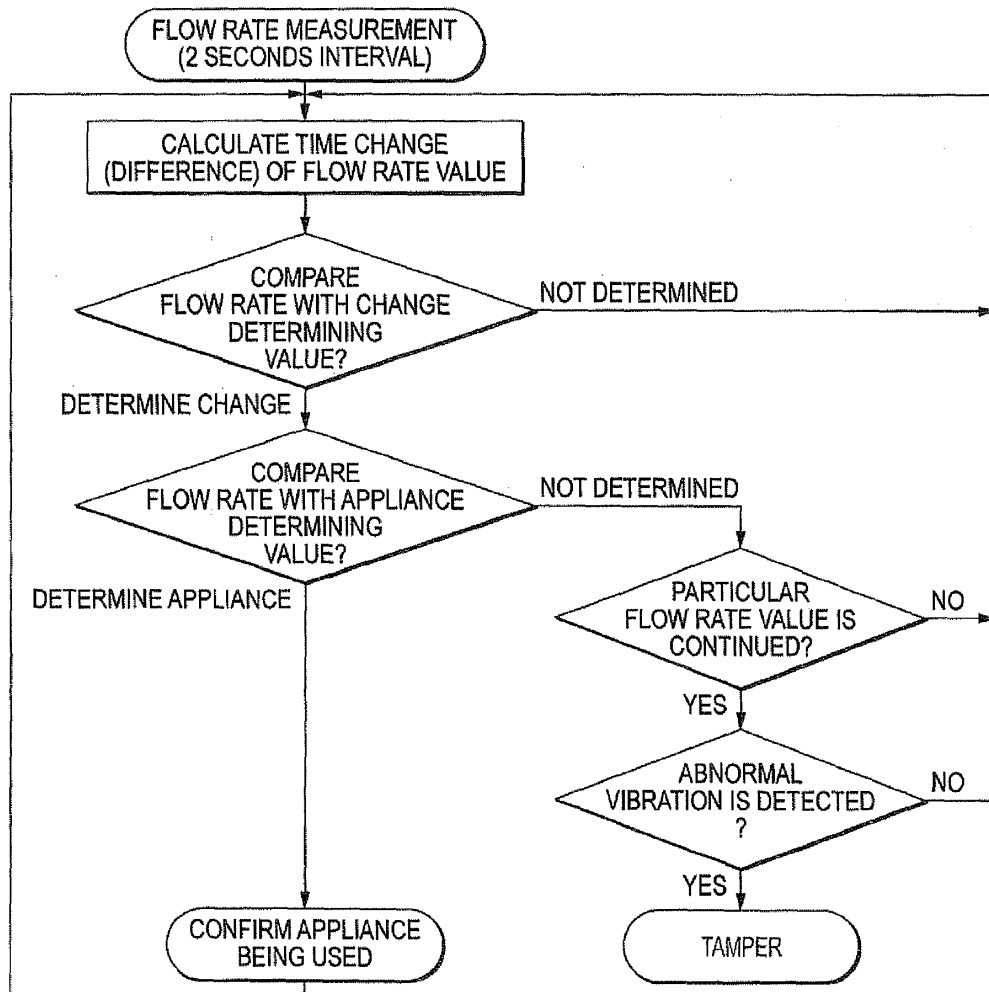


FIG. 8

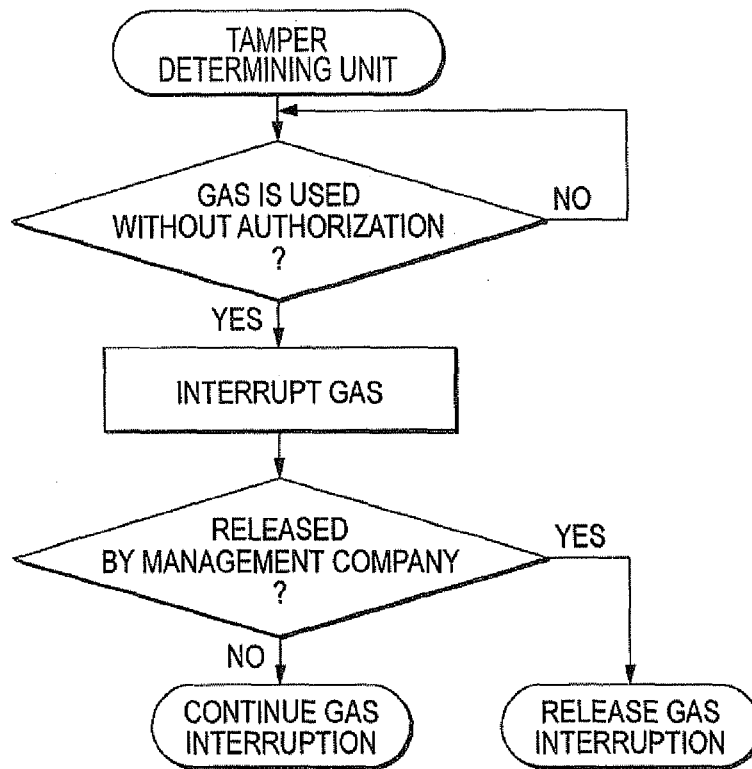


FIG. 9

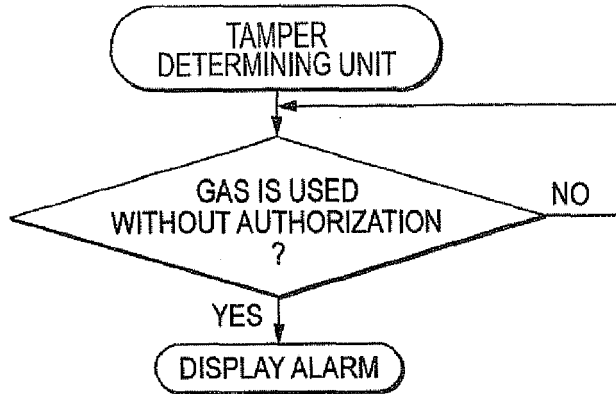


FIG. 10

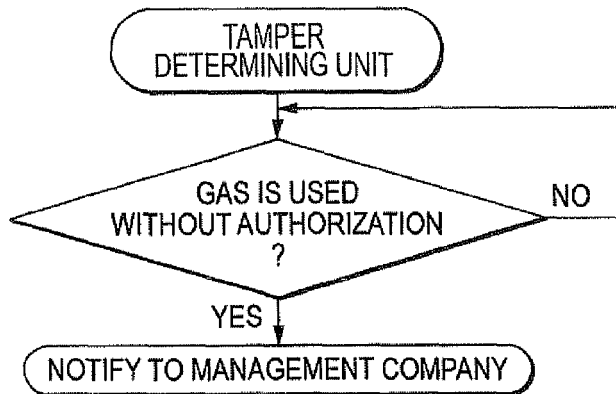


FIG. 11

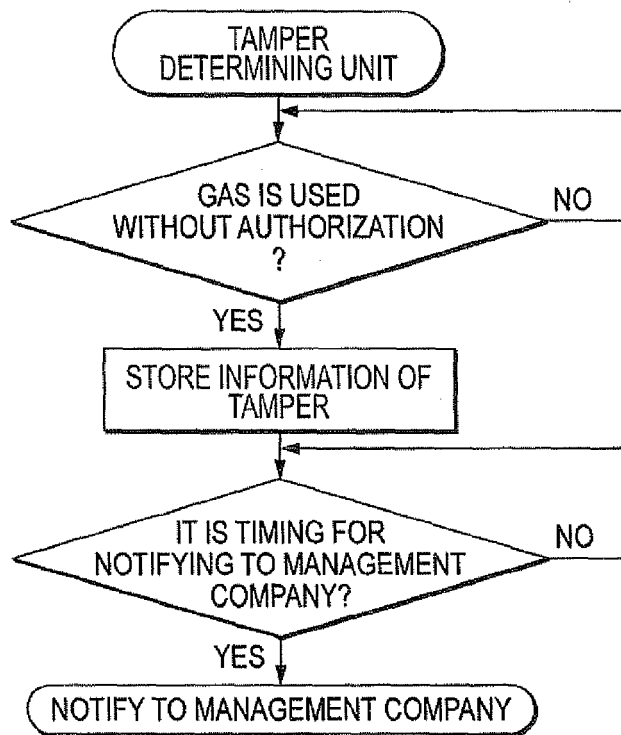


FIG. 12

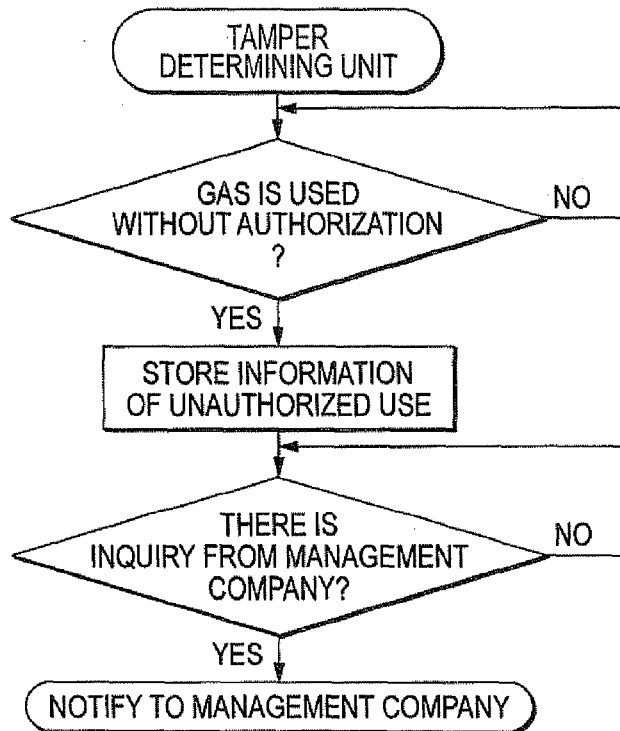
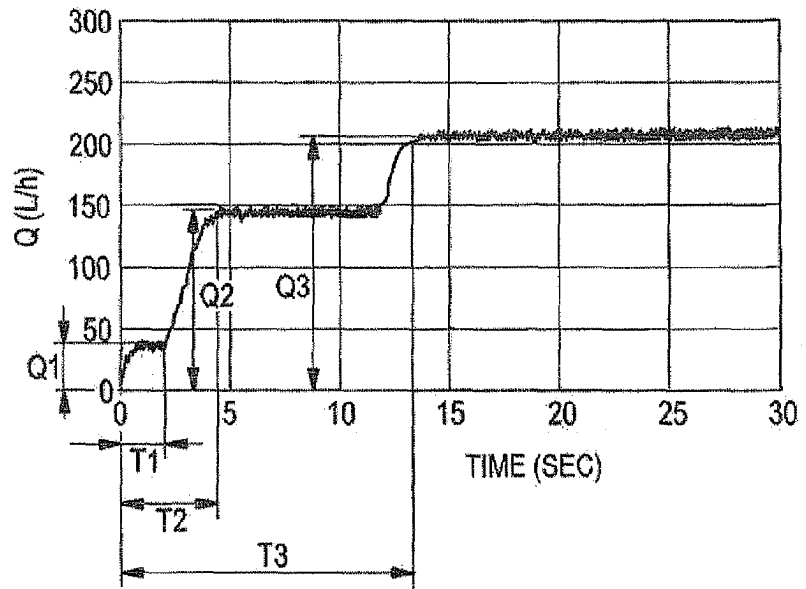


FIG. 13



PATTERN TABLE

T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
2.5	4.5	13	-	-	43	145	205	-	-

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/JP2008/003624

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER G01F3/22(2006.01)i, F23K5/00(2006.01)i, F23N5/18(2006.01)i, F23N5/26(2006.01)i, G01F1/66(2006.01)i		
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
B. FIELDS SEARCHED		
Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) G01F3/22, F23K5/00, F23N5/18, F23N5/26, G01F1/66		
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1922-1996 Jitsuyo Shinan Toroku Koho 1996-2009 Kokai Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1971-2009 Toroku Jitsuyo Shinan Koho 1994-2009		
Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	JP 2007-292393 A (Matsushita Electric Industrial Co., Ltd.), 08 November, 2007 (08.11.07), Par. Nos. [0025] to [0065]; Figs. 1 to 10 (Family: none)	1-11
Y	JP 2004-205421 A (Tokyo Gas Co., Ltd.), 22 July, 2004 (22.07.04), Par. Nos. [0017] to [0049]; Fig. 1 (Family: none)	1-11
Y	JP 2004-144642 A (Tokyo Gas Co., Ltd.), 20 May, 2004 (20.05.04), Par. Nos. [0068] to [0073]; Figs. 1, 4 (Family: none)	2
<input type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. <input type="checkbox"/> See patent family annex.		
* Special categories of cited documents: "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance "E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified) "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed "T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention "X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone "Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art "&" document member of the same patent family		
Date of the actual completion of the international search 03 February, 2009 (03.02.09)		Date of mailing of the international search report 17 February, 2009 (17.02.09)
Name and mailing address of the ISA/ Japanese Patent Office		Authorized officer
Facsimile No.		Telephone No.

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Patent documents cited in the description

- JP 2003149027 A [0003]
- JP 2007318159 A [0052]